Edip Yuksel vs. Ali Sina Round 7 Part 27

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Round VII -27

As for your claim that "no scholar has understood them as metaphors" is simply false. Though my understanding of the Quran does not depend on this scholar or that scholar or the number of their votes, I will give some examples to demonstrate that you frequently make false claims with hyperbolic pontifications.

For instance, Muhammad Asad, in his renowned translation of the Quran, The Message, makes the following comments on verse 7:166:

According to Zamakhshari and Razf, the expression "We said unto them" is here synonymous with "We decreed with' regard to them" - God's "saying" being in this case a metonym for a manifestation of His will. As for the substance of God's decree, "Be as apes despicable", the famous tabi'i Mujahid explain it thus: "[Only] their hearts were transformed, that is, they were not [really] transformed into apes: this is but a metaphor (mathai) coined by God with regard to them, similar to the metaphor of `the ass carrying books' [62: 5]" (Tabari, in his commentary on 2 : 65; also Mandr I, 343; VI, 448; and IX, 379). A similar explanation is given by Raghib. It should be borne in mind that the expression "like an ape" is often used in classical Arabic to describe a person who is unable to restrain his gross appetites or passions.

Obviously many Muslims realized this is plain nonsense and did their best to explain it off, but the text is clear. The metaphor of ass carrying book is a clear metaphor and the verse saying Jews were transformed into apes and swine are clearly not metaphors. Expression “like an ape” is used in all languages and it is clearly a derogatory comparison but saying they were transformed into apes is a different thing.

I did not know that you were also illiterate, more accurately a selective illiterate, since in my previous answer I made my case clear from the Quran that UMMY means gentile, not illiterate. In case you missed by accident, here is a more detailed argument on this case. I will copy and paste from the samples of our upcoming Reformist Translation of the Quran. You do not have the right for complaining from my copying and pasting, since I do not need to re-invent the same medicine for the same allergy:

No I certainly did not miss your statement. Nonetheless I quoted the verse 2:78 were Muhammad calls the Jews ummayoon ٱُمِّيُّونَ. Are you telling me that Muhammad thought that

Jews were gentiles?

The Arabic word "ummy," however, describes people who are not Jewish or Christian. The meaning of this word, which occurs six times in the Quran, has nevertheless been rendered as "one who can neither read nor write." This deliberate manipulation by Muslim scholars has become widely accepted as the true meaning of the word. For example Yusuf Ali, in his translation, follows this pattern:

"... So believe in God and His Apostle, the unlettered Prophet,...."

Marmaduke Pickthall's translation also reflects the same manipulation:

"... So believe in Allah and His messenger, the prophet who can neither read nor write,..."

Our translation of 7:158: **"… So you shall believe in God and His messenger, the Gentile prophet…"** (7:158)

COMMENTARY ON 7:158

The Quran itself provides guidance for the true meaning of "ummy". If we reflect on the verse 3:20 below we will easily understand that "ummy" does not mean an illiterate person:

And say to those who received the scripture, as well as those who did not receive any scripture (ummyyeen)... (3:20)

In this verse the word "ummy" describes Meccan idol worshipers. It is obvious that "ummy" does not mean illiterate because it has been used as the counterpart of the people of the scripture. If the verse was " ... And say to those who are literate and illiterate", then the orthodox translation of "ummy" would be correct. According to the verse 3:20 the people of Arab peninsula were two main groups:

1. The people of the scripture, i.e., Jews and Christians.

3. Gentiles, who were neither Jewish nor Christian.

If the people who were neither Jews nor Christians were called "ummyyeen" (3:20; 3:75), then the meaning of "ummy" is very clear. As a matter of fact, the verse 3:75 clarifies its meaning as Gentile.

Mecca was the cultural center of the Arabs in the 7th century. Poetry competitions were being held there. It is a historical fact that Meccans were not familiar with the Bible, thus they were gentiles. So the verse 62:2 describes Meccan people by the word "ummyyeen":

"He is the One who sent to the Gentiles (ummyyeen) a messenger from among them, to recite to them His revelations, purify them, and teach them the scripture and wisdom. Before this, they had gone far astray." (62:2)

The disbelievers claimed that Muhammad was quoting verses from the Old and New

Testaments (25:5; 68:15). The verse below refutes their accusation and gives the answer:

"You did not read any previous scriptures, nor did you write them with your hand. In that case, the objectors would have had reason to harbor doubts." (29:4 8) border=0 v:shapes="_x0000_i1025">

This verse tells us that Muhammad did not read nor write previous scriptures. The word "min qablihi" (previous) suggests that Muhammad did read and write the final scripture.

Muhammad was a literate gentile (ummy)

After this examination on the true meaning of the word "ummy", here are the reasons and proofs for the fact that Muhammad was a literate Gentile:

• To magnify the miraculous aspect of the Quran, religious people thought that the story of illiteracy would be alluring.

• The producer(s) of the illiteracy story found it relatively easy to change the meaning of "ummy." Nevertheless, the word appears throughout the Quran, and consistently means "Gentile" (2:78; 3:20; 3:75; 62:2). In verses 3:20 and 3:75, the Quran uses the word "ummy" as the counterpart of the "ehlil kitab" ("People of the Book," a phrase that in both of these verses equates with "Jews and Christians").

• The Quran describes Meccan people with the word "ummyyeen" (Gentiles). (62:2). According to the orthodox claim, all Meccan people must have been illiterate. Why then were the poems of pre-Islamic Meccan poets hung on the walls of the Ka'ba (the ancient monotheistic shrine of Abraham)?

• The Arabs of the 7th century were using letters as numbers. This alphabetical numbering system is called "Abjad." The merchants of those days had to know the letters of the alphabet to record their accounts! If Muhammad was a successful international merchant, as is universally accepted, then he most probably knew this numbering system. The Arabs stopped using the "Abjad" system in the 9th century when they took "Arabic numbers" from India .

• The different spelling of the word "bism" in the beginning of the Basmalah and in the first verse of chapter 96 is one of the many evidences supporting literacy of Muhammad. It is not reasonable for an illiterate to dictate two different spellings of the same word which is pronounced the same.

• The very first revelation from the Angel Gabriel was, Muslims believe, "Read!" And the first five verses of that revelation encourage reading and writing (96:1-5). The second revelation was "The pen and writing" (68:1). These facts compel some questions that orthodox scholarship would rather avoid. Does God command an illiterate man to "read"? If so, could Muhammad read after Gabriel's instruction to do so? The story told in Hadith books about the first revelation asserting that Muhammad could read only after three trials ending by an angelic "squeeze" contradicts the other stories claiming that Muhammad died as an illiterate!

• Traditional history books accept that Muhammad dictated the Quran and controlled its recording. Even if we accept that Muhammad did not know how to read or write before revelation of the Quran, we cannot claim that he preserved this illiteracy during the 23 years while he was dictating the Quran! Let us accept, for the sake of argument, that Muhammad was illiterate before the revelation of the Quran. Why then did he insist on staying illiterate for 23 years after the first revelation: "Read !"? Did he not obey his Lord's command? Did he receive another command forbidding him from reading and writing?

• Was it so difficult for Muhammad to learn to read and write? If a person still does not learn to read and write after 23 years of careful dictation of a book, what kind of intellect is that?

• If Muhammad was encouraging his followers to read and write (which he did when he recited 2:44 to them), then why should he have excluded himself?

Muslim scholars, who are in disagreement on a bewildering array of subjects, somehow have managed to agree on the story of Muhammad's illiteracy. Perhaps the glorification of illiteracy, using it as a positive attribute of a worshipped figure, is one of the causes of the high current level illiteracy in Muslim communities.